

Wednesday, November 27, 2002  
17 Dubois Street  
Wallkill, N.Y. 12589-3113

Livestock and seed Programs  
Agriculture Marketing Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Stop 0249, Room 2092-S  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0249

I wish to add to the public comment about the irradiation of meat in the National School Lunch Program. As the Father of 2 school age children, this policy would directly impact my family.

I am adamantly against the irradiation of any meat (marked or unmarked). The future health effects of this process have not been studied adequately and the health implications are unknown. Parents who pay for the food their children are eating are entitled to know about nutritional effects from the food their children consume at school, yet the rules on labeling don't apply to school lunch programs. Taxpayer funds should never be used to promote an unproven and potentially harmful technology using the future leaders, workforce and citizens (our most precious resource) of our nation as test subjects.

Irradiation is unacceptable as a way to deal with impurities on meat. How can our government allow E. Coli 0157:H7, listeria and salmonella into our food supply on meat products without proper funding for effective testing and process monitoring? There is an enormous dearth of research on the long-term health effects on our children's growing bodies of irradiated food and the unique, new chemicals are formed within the meat during this process without knowing the effects these chemical changes would have on our children's health in the future. This process also depletes nutrients in the meat.

The research that has been carried out in animals shows numerous health problems including reproductive problems, genetic damage and cancer development. How can we even discuss experimenting on our children when these red flags are so glaringly evident? Could it be because the meat industry, which has a long history of lax supervision by our federal government, is now to have even less? This untested technology will lead to even more Americans getting food-borne illness and possibly lifetimes of suffering with life-ending diseases. Let us not use our future as Guinea pigs for higher profits.

Thank you for allowing me to comment on this vital issue.

Thomas V. Connor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas V. Connor", with a stylized flourish at the end.